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ABSTRACT

Information on the use and effectiveness of follow-up surveys in four-year and two-year institutions are obtained. In the four-year sector, 55 public and 34 private colleges were included, while in the two-year sector, the entire public systems of four states were compared. This involved 15 institutions in Georgia, 17 in Maryland, 16 in South Carolina, 54 in Texas, and 25 additional two-year colleges from other states. Data obtained from questionnaires revealed that a preponderance of both two- and four-year schools planned to do follow-up surveys on their graduates to improve their programs. Academic administrative personnel and--to a lesser extent--counselors were by far the majority of persons to use these surveys. Findings are also given for: number of institutions conducting follow-up surveys from 1976-1979: uses for surveys: and specific information considered most useful. Also included are discussions by Robert Huff and Robert Gell on uses of outcome data at the "macro" level and follow-up survey data at the institutional level. Several informal discussions between workshop participants considering follow-up data are appended. It is concluded that judicious use of follow-up surveys, along with other evaluation tools, offers one means of maintaining control over higher education by educators, as opposed to losing control to funding agencies. (DC)

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Using Student Follow-up Surveys To Improve College Programs

A Staff Report

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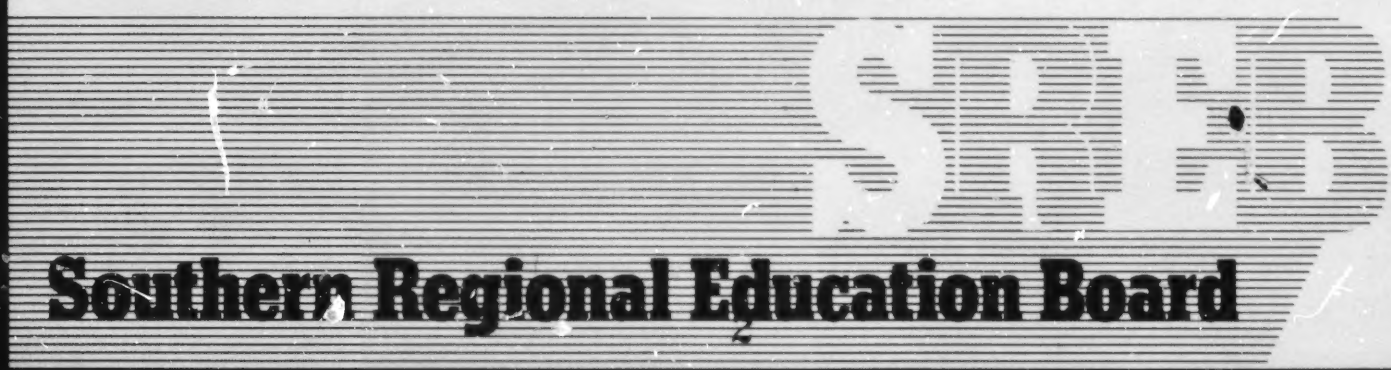

Foreword

The Southern Regional Education Board, with partial support from the Exxon Education Foundation, has just completed a project promoting college student follow-up studies based on standardized questions. The final phase of the study encouraged institutional application of findings from such studies and has provided interinstitutional comparisons of information.

Current assessment of these activities, as reported here, indicates continued growing interest in the conduct of follow-up studies but considerable evidence that findings are not widely used for adaptation of programs and practices to student needs. This apparently results from a frequent absence of plans for any use of follow-up studies for program assessment at the departmental level and also from a lack of articulation with other outcome information. Both of these limitations may be overcome by institutions determined to advance the usefulness of their follow-up studies.

As institutions move into a period of more brisk competition for students, it may be expected that increasing use will be made of follow-up studies for testing the adequacy of institutional response to student needs. Such applications will prove to be constructive to the extent that the design of surveys, and plans for implementation of survey findings, reflect the active participation of those responsible for the management of academic affairs in institutions.

Winfred L. Godwin
President

SEP 2 1980

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Introduction

The SREB project, Comparisons of Outcome Data, concluded with a workshop on April 17, 1980, to explore the uses to which data from follow-up surveys of college graduates are really applied. This report distills the remarks of the workshop speakers and participants, and presents conclusions on the uses of follow-up surveys as a result of SREB's concern about this area.

Various perspectives were represented by the participants in the workshop. Dr. Robert Huff, Executive Director, Arizona Board of Regents, was actively involved in the original development of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) materials to measure outcomes of higher education. From that experience, dating back a decade, Dr. Huff has moved to the vantage point of a state system of higher education, giving him a very practical view of how outcome measures might actually be used.

Dr. Robert Gell's perspective on the uses of follow-up survey results ranges from immediate involvement in developing survey results as director of institutional research at Montgomery Community College to his current position as president of Cecil Community College, a two-year institution in Maryland, where decisions on program continuance and discontinuance are determined in part by the statewide application of follow-up survey results.

The participants in the workshop are listed in the Appendix. They represent academic leadership at various agencies and institutions, institutional researchers, and placement directors. Their various roles in serving institutional and student needs are reflected in their comments about the uses of follow-up survey data.

The SREB project on Comparisons of Outcome Data is the final phase of a three-year involvement by SREB in follow-up surveys, with partial funding by grants from the Exxon Education Foundation. In 1977, SREB embarked on its first project on follow-up surveys. The primary objective of that effort was to develop a common core of questions for follow-up surveys by four-year and two-year institutions, and to promote the use of this common core. It was hoped that the use of standardized questions would permit comparison of results between institutions, and thereby lend more meaning to any one institution's findings. The second SREB project focused on Comparisons of Outcome Data. As more institutions voluntarily availed themselves of the common core of questions, it became possible to compare results and to distribute such comparisons to participating institutions in the region.

At the conclusion of these activities, it became obvious that follow-up survey activity throughout higher education in the Southern region is producing more and more data. The issue boils down to the question of whether the information is really being used and, if so, for what purposes.

What Institutions Say About Their Uses of Follow-up Surveys

In 1979, as a second phase of activities on follow-up surveys, SREB undertook to facilitate the actual use of survey results by individual institutions. Comparative results were compiled to enable institutions to view their own survey information in the context of results from other colleges. The limited meaning of an institution's follow-up survey findings in isolation was thought to be a stumbling block to the use of survey results.

The comparisons prepared by SREB included findings of those surveys that had sufficient standardization of some or all questions to permit comparisons. In the four-year sector, 55 public and 34 private colleges were included; and in the two-year sector, the entire public systems of four states were compared. This involved 15 institutions in Georgia, 17 in Maryland, 16 in South Carolina, and 54 in Texas. In addition, 25 individual two-year colleges from other states were included.

Some of the items that were compared, and for which summary medians and ranges were developed, are the following:

1. College graduates employed, unemployed, employed part-time, employed in jobs related to their majors, employed in state.
2. Salaries of jobs, career potential of jobs, type of employer, how job was found.
3. College graduates attending graduate school, attending full-time, type of continued education, quality of preparation for further education.
4. Primary purpose in attending college.
5. Satisfaction with various college experiences, with overall college experience.

As the project proceeded, SREB staff became increasingly concerned regarding how the results of the surveys were actually being used. While the chief purpose of the project was to facilitate the use of these surveys by providing comparative data, we did not have a clear idea about actual applications. More specifically, it was important to know whether the findings were being used mainly for popularity or self-justification reasons, or more fundamentally to affect educational programs and faculty and student activities. Such knowledge would have a large bearing on the value of the comparative data that were developed through the project.

To explore the kind and depth of the uses of follow-up surveys, SREB sent out questionnaires to 400 institutions which were indentified as having responded in some way to our past student follow-up activities. This group of 400 colleges represents about half of the institutions in the SREB region. The questionnaires were sent to academic administrators because our aim was to explore the academic uses of the results.

Sixty-seven percent of the colleges responded to our questionnaire. We received 175 responses from the four-year colleges and 84 from the two-year institutions.

An analysis of the findings led to the following conclusions:

1. A preponderance of both two- and four-year schools plan to do follow-up surveys (see Table 1). Schools which have conducted surveys say they will repeat them. Some which have not conducted surveys since 1975 indicate plans to do so now. Some cite composition of new committees or new

functions of established departments, or even new school or state mandates for annual surveys to be conducted. The figures also reflect a rising interest from 1976 to 1979 in doing surveys (see Table 2). This implies that the recent efforts to conduct follow-up surveys have generally been rewarding, at least for the schools which responded.

TABLE 1
Percent of Institutions Planning Future Follow-up Studies

	Yes	No
Two-Year Institutions	98%	2%
Four-Year Institutions	93	7

TABLE 2
Number of Institutions Conducting Follow-up Surveys, 1976-1979

	1976	1977	1978	1979
Two-Year Institutions	0	5	18	51
Four-Year Institutions	10	12	33	81

2. The schools say they use the results to improve programs and curricula and to provide career counseling and placement information to students (see Table 3). For both four-year and two-year colleges, these two uses represented about 70 percent of the responses. Among the four-year institutions, the results are used about as much for program evaluation as for career counseling. Two-year colleges use the findings significantly more for program adjustments than for career counseling. However, this difference may be due to the much closer relationship of the more vocationally oriented two-year curriculum to employment. The student's course of study is based on specific employment plans. Thus, there is not as much need for counseling after the student is committed to a course of study.

TABLE 3
Percent of Responses Indicating Use of Findings for Specific Purposes

	Program Evaluation	Career Counseling	Admissions & Recruitment	Fund Raising	Alumni	Other
Two-Year Institutions	45%	27%	5%	10%	1%	12%
Four-Year Institutions	32	36	8	6	8	10

3. In accordance with the primary uses of the surveys, academic administrative personnel and—to a lesser extent—counselors represent by far the majority of persons who see and utilize survey findings (see Table 4). In both two-year and four-year colleges over four-fifths of the total uses are by faculty, administrators, and career counselors. Faculty and administrators comprise 68 percent of the users in the four-year colleges, and 56 percent of the users in junior colleges. In four-year colleges more use is made of the results by alumni officers and admissions staff than in two-year colleges.

Overall, the four-year schools share the survey findings with a somewhat wider variety of college personnel and thus utilize the results in a proportionately wider range of functions than do two-year schools, regardless of size.

TABLE 4
Percent of Responses Indicating Specific Users of the Survey Results

	Faculty	Administrators	Counselors	Admissions Personnel	Alumni Officers	Others
Two-Year Institutions	32%	36%	20%	2%	1%	9%
Four-Year Institutions	27	29	25	8	6	5

4. Both four-year and two-year schools indicated that job information was clearly the most useful information collected (see Table 5). Also important, but not nearly as useful as the job findings, was information on further education and evaluation of program quality.

TABLE 5
Percent of Responses Indicating Specific Information as Most Useful

	Job	Further Education	Educational Evaluation	Other
Two-Year Institutions	44%	17%	17%	22%
Four-Year Institutions	46	17	22	15

5. The breakdown of responses by enrollment size among four-year schools reveals that proportionately fewer truly large schools (5,000 and over) have reported follow-up surveys and fewer of these say they will do so in the future than do smaller ones. Moreover, among the large schools, especially those with over 10,000 enrollment, the trend for recent activity (1978 and 1979) is not nearly so pronounced as it is among smaller four-year institutions and among two-year colleges as a whole. Thus, there have been proportionately fewer, less recent, and less comprehensive follow-up survey activities among the large four-year schools.

There are several caveats about these survey findings:

One is that they indicate use in the *responding* colleges. How many studies were done or used in the non-responding colleges is not known.

Second, and more important, is that this survey, while indicating that the findings were used, did not really inform us as to the depth of use. We were especially concerned with use for fundamental educational processes, as in the shaping of curriculum and for student counseling.

Third, we noted that in many cases the chief academic officer did not respond to the questionnaire directly but sent it to someone else. This casts doubt on the overall importance of the survey results to those charged with responsibility for academic affairs.

Fourth, although many institutions indicated that the findings were used for program evaluation, we do not know whether such evaluation was acted on or whether programs were actually affected.

Uses of Outcome Data—at the "Macro" Level

—Robert Huff

. . . About 11 years ago when I went to the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), we immediately set about developing costing methodologies. But we were soon challenged with the fact that we were in danger of knowing what everything cost, but not knowing the value of anything we had costed—*What were the outputs that we had costed?* This was a valid criticism. It's easy to do cost studies, but they are worthless unless they are coupled with the assessment of values. And so we set about developing methods to measure the outputs.

. . . In retrospect we were rather starry-eyed. As we looked for "outcome indicators," we had the notion that we could measure *anything* if we really wanted to. We looked at entrance and exit data. We talked a lot of "value added." We drew samples of students; we developed all kinds of questionnaires; and we did follow-up studies.

. . . In the process of all this, we grew up a little bit. My perception now is that none of the early efforts in this direction has had lasting benefit or great worth. (I'm not speaking of the current efforts. I suspect they are more realistic and simpler than our grandiose early efforts.) I really have not seen those early efforts come down the pike to become an integral part of the management processes of institutions of higher learning.

. . . What this all amounts to is that there probably are no definitive, objective measures of what is essentially an abstract, subjective process, namely higher education.

. . . At the macro level (working with regents and legislators) my perception is that the funding of higher education is an act of faith. Higher education is accepted at those levels as a contributor to society. It's a good thing. And, policymakers are not really questioning the overall values of higher education. I just don't hear the hue and cry for justification for higher education that we heard even a few years ago when it was in vogue to challenge whether a young person needed a degree.

. . . In working with the legislators and policymakers I've decided that accountability is not the issue. The issue now is control. What I see is more and more language in appropriations acts that tells higher education where you can't spent the money or you can't start the program—*you can't do this and you can't do that until you come back to an interim committee and report and get a release.* Maybe the outcome data can help us, but I don't see these playing a part in that particular battle.

. . . So, from a macro level, what is the role of output data? I'll preface this by saying that there should be some in-depth, careful, detailed follow-ups at the department or discipline level and the institutional level—for program planning and adjustment purposes. But at the level of the regents, the legislators, and the governor's office, I suggest we beat them to the punch. I would avoid letting output assessment become a problem by regularly and routinely developing and presenting certain data about students. The data needed will vary from state to state. In Arizona, for example, legislators are extremely concerned about who is being served—the issue is whether we are just exporting people who have been educated at the state's expense. I'd like to be able to regularly lay out data to show student origins, and where they are settling, by discipline. How many graduates stay in our state—and where—and how many go elsewhere? This type of information should be laid out right alongside the cost and budget data.

Not only should we be concerned about output accounting, which is what the subject is today, but also about input accounting. That means community advisory groups—honest-to-goodness, high-level community advisory groups for your schools of business, engineering, architecture, education, journalism, etc. These groups can help plan the curriculum with follow-up data on how the products of these programs are performing and what is needed. We have to listen to these groups. They have to be for real and not just window dressing. They will create a real link between the university and its programs from the inception stage, through the operating stage, and right on down to the employment stage.

The most important use of follow-up surveys is from an academic standpoint. It is at the departmental level that the information should be used. Every single faculty member has the responsibility to know where his students are—not just from a "bucks" perspective of what their salaries are, but in terms of the other values too. But I don't think this is happening. The only way in which it will happen is if the chief academic officer of each institution will say to the faculty that it is going to take place. . . . To the extent that follow-up survey data may be used to improve program offerings, the place for such data is at the provost's desk, where program decisions should be made, rather than at the regents'—or an even higher—level.

Follow-up Survey Data at the Institutional Level

—Robert Gell

Robert Gell's remarks may be better understood in the context of the background of how program evaluation operates for community colleges in Maryland. A brief description of the system follows.

Since 1978, the Maryland State Board for Community Colleges has used a program evaluation system that is heavily dependent on information obtained through follow-up surveys of graduates and former students. The system compiles computerized data from such surveys together with additional information, such as the number of students enrolled over recent years and the numbers completing particular programs. The follow-up survey supplies for each program in every community college the percentage of students who indicate their goals were achieved, who have found jobs in related or non-related fields, and who have transferred to other institutions. The findings for each of these variables are measured against program goals or criteria which each institution and program had initially established for itself. Such a criterion might be a given number of program completions, or a given percentage of graduates in related jobs.

This data system flags those programs for which a series of negative findings accumulate, relative to the goals or criteria that were originally established. The flagging process serves as the quantitative signal that further evaluation of the program is in order. The president of each community college receives annually a listing of the "flagged" programs as an indication that these need reviewing. The president's response regarding the action taken as a result of this flagging process is a matter of public record.

The first cycle of this program review system resulted in five program discontinuations. The second cycle netted three program discontinuations. Meanwhile, other programs have been consolidated or modified.

Examples of the flagging indicators are programs which show a consistent drop in enrollments and for which a large percentage of students indicate their goals were not achieved.

Robert Gell:

. . . Back in 1969, when I first came to Montgomery Community College, the feeling was developing that follow-up studies were among the really "good things to do." You expected to feel better if you had a follow-up study. No self-respecting institutional researcher would go to any meeting without saying that he was at least planning a follow-up study. We came up with all sorts of follow-up studies. This was partly so because researchers are very task-oriented. When the president told us to develop a follow-up study, we went right ahead and we developed all kinds of questionnaires.

But the trouble was we didn't really know what we were supposed to do with all the findings after we had them. The problem with these studies was that we obtained a lot of answers, but did not know what the questions were for which we had compiled answers. We found how many students transferred. But we had no idea how many students were *supposed* to transfer. We knew how many found jobs. It was easy to establish that 70 percent of our career track graduates were getting jobs, and 30 percent were transferring. But nobody told us what these percentages were to be measured against. That's the problem, as I see it, with follow-up studies.

. . . So, what's necessary is to determine first what "success" is—ideally this should be done at the inception of a program. What are the minimum criteria in terms of the enrollments, costs, completions, job placements, salaries, etc. in connection with a program? Then, from the follow-up data, if it is determined that the program is not meeting these criteria, the program needs to be looked at to see if it's really viable, or if it should be discontinued.

. . . The only way I can justify the time and money spent for follow-up studies is to make sure they are going to be a part of a total system for decision making. Then follow-up data can become one part of the information I need regarding the discontinuance of a program.

. . . State boards of higher education traditionally think of program evaluation in terms of detailed reports, with on-site visits, similar to a full-fledged accreditation evaluation. This is a qualitative approach, which implies that eventually every program will be looked at in depth.

. . . I like to compare the quantitative indicators of a follow-up survey to the gauges in your car. When no trouble lights are blinking in your car, you don't take the car apart to study it in depth. Follow-up indicators serve as gauges, or trouble signals, to flag those programs that need review. They tell you where and when to get into an in-depth analysis. If there are no trouble lights blinking, leave those programs alone, and worry only about the ones that are flashing trouble. If you monitor the quantitative indicators, you'll know where to apply your qualitative reviews.

This system provides a context in which to make decisions. It's awfully easy to just let things ride. What this system does is to give the president of a community college the leverage with the program people that is needed to discontinue a program. Hopefully, your administrators are already thinking about the problems of the program anyway, but can benefit from the added evidence which follow-up data provide.

Other Comments About the Uses of Follow-up Surveys

Gell: We feel that some outcome indicators provide objective information. For example, How many students graduate? What kinds of students are served? What are the attrition rates? We need surveys to tell us objective outcomes because who is going to take the word of a professor? We don't trust ourselves anymore. We don't take the word of a program coordinator. We need an "outside check." Every departmental chairman or professor does have some idea of where students go and how they produce. But who takes their word? It's a matter of establishing credibility with the external powers that be.

Estes: My impression is that the people who make the most use of the survey results today are in the recruitment areas. They use the information to analyze the kind of students who have been served, and to project that information to attract additional students. Often the data are used in college catalogs. Also the results are used for legislative lobbying. I have the impression that the findings are not really used at the departmental level. The faculty want their own studies, or depend on their own contacts.

Bolte: We (the University of South Florida) were one of the pilot schools in the NCHEMS outcome study and the development of those initial questionnaires. We were very interested in outcomes but have not continued using the follow-up system. Generally, I think, we are not making as good a use of what we know about some of the outcomes as I would like.

Goglia: I was involved with SREB in conducting the statewide follow-up survey of the 1977 graduates of the public insitiutions in Georgia. I regret to say that even though the survey was completed, the uses of the findings within the institutions have not been what they ought to have been. We are hopeful that in the future more of this kind of thing will take place.

Lassiter: In Tennessee we are working under an external mandate, with a court order that ultimately requires that the distribution of our graduates, by race, will have to match the racial distribution of the population. In our case this imposes something beyond just follow-up surveys of graduates. We have a data collection system that I call "tracking." We survey the entering student, the continuing student, the former student, and the graduate. There are all kinds of side benefits to "tracking" (as opposed to just "following" graduates).

. . . Some of our faculties have been astounded to find that the majority of the non-returnees were not in academic difficulties. The behavior of the working student, for example, who may drop out for a quarter and then return, is inexplicable to some of our faculty. The constant shifting of our student population—in and out of matriculation—is something our faculities and our legislature do not comprehend. We need to track students to be able to explain why retention ratios are what they turn out to be. This is especially true in an urban institution where the faculty has no understanding, for example, of why M.B.A. students in accounting drop out during income tax filing quarters.

Dahl: The Kentucky Longitudinal Study, now being initiated, will deal with high school graduates for three years (1980, 1982, and 1984). Approximately 4,000 students in each of those classes will be followed-up annually . . . . My concern with the technique of exit surveying, *after* students have left a program, is that this by itself does not produce an adequate evaluation of the program as a whole.

Holderfield: Our academic officers have not been using the follow-up survey information across the system for program improvements. . . . But I think they will use the information in the future. Our

follow-up process is going to become more important to our institutions because of the legislated program evaluation which will have to be done annually. Speaking very bureaucratically, our schools are going to have to document the performance of their programs. Our Board is getting very concerned with new programs because we have no money. . . . Hard times will result in more control by our Board, and that control will require institutions to go to the Board to justify and maintain programs. So I do think follow-up activity will continue in South Carolina and that it will be used for program improvement.

. . . We have a couple of other follow-ups going on in our office—with industries that have used our pre-employment services. We evaluate the quality of our programs in the technical schools in terms of the employees these industries have recruited out of our programs. That's a different kind of follow-up. We're going to more than 500 firms and asking how they rate the quality of the students' training.

Reichard: We have found that the main forces motivating follow-up surveys have been external. The accrediation groups, for example, have been quite interested in follow-up surveys.

Holderfield: In terms of complying with the Veterans' Administration reporting requirements, we are liable at the state level for the data.

Bolte: Almost always it is some external pressure that motivates us to do these studies, and the uses to which one puts a survey may change in the middle of the process. We had originally intended to use follow-up surveys to learn why we were losing our brightest students. Then, with external mandates, we had to relate the findings to a different question, for example, the retention of minority students.

Problems Associated with Using Follow-up Survey Data

Ruff: I'm impressed with the Maryland State Community College program evaluation system, but I hope it doesn't become the tail that wags the dog. It could become mechanical; it could take on false validity. The results of outcome studies have a role in internal review at the provost's and the departmental levels. I'm not sure I would want to elevate this to the regents' level, and certainly not to the legistative level.

Estes: The outcome data in follow-up studies generate objective data which may be unrelated to the criteria that departmental chairmen feel are important in evaluating their programs. How, then, do we expect that outcome data from a follow-up survey will be used at the departmental level? Have we first excluded the human agent (the departmental chairman) and do we then ask him to address the findings of a follow-up survey that do not reflect his own criteria of success?

Gell: You do have to establish credibility with the departmental chairmen. They do have a role in determining at the inception of a program what they consider "success" to be. Then, together, we can negotiate appropriate indicators of such success.

Seawell: We find programs in which the students' objectives for completing a program are vastly different from those of the faculty. If the students take jobs in industry instead of in teaching or research, the faculty often feel they have failed. So you can't always take the faculty's objectives and develop those as indicators of success.

Gell: It's easier, of course, for two-year programs, as compared to four-year colleges, to use quantitative factors to evaluate their programs. To begin with, our community colleges are structured around producing graduates of programs. Some of our four-year institutions may not produce a graduate of a program for several years, but that is not something they need to worry about.

Estes: I think community colleges are doing a much better job with their Boards of Trustees, with the legislature—or whoever is allocating money—in terms of presenting their data in a usable form. They do it in terms of follow-up studies on jobs and retention. Thereby they educate legislators to ask those same kinds of productivity questions of a university, whose mission is not merely producing graduates of a program. In a university you can't cancel this and that program this year or next, without considering whether five years down the line you will still have a balanced quality mix. But legislators are now attuned to getting that kind of information from community colleges, and they expect it from comprehensive universities too.

How Valid and Reliable Are the Results of Follow-up Surveys?

Redmon: . . . The question that generally has come to us (the College Entrance Examination Board) is, How reliable is the informatior that students reveal about themselves—if we're going to pin program planning on it?

Gell: First of all, what else are you going to use? Do graduates and former students really not know what is good for them?

Tschechtelin: We found that we tend to hear from the academically successful students. The results, in that sense, overstate success. Probably, in terms of transfers and achievement of objectives, the results paint a better picture than really exists.

Huff: . . . One of the problems I had with follow-up questionnaires was that I didn't know who responds. I don't know how representative they are of the whole group.

Gell: The problem has not been so much with the answers you get. You can do statistical tests on reliablilty that establish within ranges the confidence levels of the answers. The problem, as I see it, has been that we have not defined what "success" means—what percentages are supposed to get related jobs, what salary levels are expected, what transfer rates are we shooting for?

Huff: I guess the thing that bothers me is that when we do follow-up studies, we do it in such a materialistic way. We tend to find out who's making how much money and where. We ought to understand that education is far more than just training for a job or making a living. Somehow I think we are in danger of losing track of that. I'll include the community colleges in this criticism too. I don't think they are just "training." That's the difference between a trade school and a community college. But we don't really know how to go after the non-materialistic values via a follow-up survey.

Gell: By the time a follow-up study has been processed, analyzed, and distributed, many times the program has gone through so many transformations, especially in a two-year college—with new courses and a changed curriculum, that the findings no longer apply to the current program.

. . . In the past the lack of data has been an excuse for not making decisions. You do put an administrator in a quandry when you provide him with data. It's much easier to say "Well, we've gotta study that" than to be confronted with the actual results of a study.

Taking Stock

During the past three years, SREB's activity in the area of college student follow-up surveys has emphasized several related objectives:

- ☐ encouraging institutions to conduct follow-up surveys as one among other tools for the evaluation of their educational programs and support services;
- ☐ the use of standardized follow-up survey questions so that comparison of results can be facilitated;
- ☐ compiling and distributing comparisons of various institutions' survey results with the expectation that such comparisons will lend more meaning to an institution's use of its own findings.

At the conclusion of the three-year effort it is time to take stock. It is quite evident that more and more institutions are conducting follow-up surveys, as documented in Table 2. Also, the wide dissemination of survey instrument models by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, the Southern Regional Education Board, and others has had an impact on increasing standardization of survey designs. Although incompatibilities among available survey results still preclude automated processing, it has been possible to prepare some comparisons, as was done in the SREB summations of 1978 and 1979 surveys in the South.* Now that so much information is being accumulated about graduates and former graduates, often at considerable expenditure of institutional resources, what can be said about use of the results?

The uses to which follow-up surveys are put might be classified as to whether they impinge initially on objectives related to students, or to the institution itself. For example, using data on college graduates' employment outcomes to counsel current students relates directly to objectives of students. On the other hand, using favorable outcomes to justify legislative appropriations relates to an institution's objectives. (It might be said, of course, that uses relating initially to institutional objectives will ultimately also accrue to student objectives.) Various uses to which follow-up surveys are put are listed below according to this classification:

Uses of Follow-up Survey Outcomes	Use Relates Initially to Goals of:
Improving the quality of programs	Students
Changing mix of programs	Students
Advising and counseling students	Students
Recruiting new students	Institution
Justifying funding	Institution
Reporting to VA and other external agencies	Institutions and Students

SREB's inquiry to 400 institutions on the uses of follow-up surveys tends to confirm that the *stated* purposes for conducting follow-up surveys relate primarily to student goals. Yet there is the nagging question as to whether those responses reflect what administrators feel the uses *should* be, rather than the *actual* uses. After exploring beneath the surface, in the workshop here reported, it is much less certain that outcome data are really applied to effect improvements at the departmental level, in counseling offices, and at the other ultimate points where the essential processes of higher education take place. Participants had less difficulty in identifying specific examples of how outcome data found their way into a college catalog, or into a report for a legislative appropriation committee, than in producing examples of how departmental offerings might have been affected by an institution's conduct of a follow-up survey.

*These comparisons may be requested from SREB.

Time and again the notion was expressed by the workshop participants that the application of follow-up survey results in program planning belongs at the departmental level or, at least, no higher than at the provost's office. Yet the most concrete example of how follow-up data are actually integrated with other information into decisions on program offerings stems from the *statewide* evaluation program of a community college system. There too, however, except in the occasional case of program discontinuance, the final translation of negative outcome findings into remedial action cannot occur anywhere but at the program level.

Follow-up surveys produce objective results (how many graduates found related jobs) as well as subjective evaluations (how well did the program prepare them for their jobs). Follow-up surveys, of course, are not the only evaluative tools available for assessments. Achievement tests are illustrative of a different method that produces objective data; student evaluations of faculty represent another tool that produces subjective information. While institutional administrative leadership has the final management responsibility to integrate all such evaluative findings into the dynamics of program changes, the actualization of such changes by its very nature is dispersed among the many sectors of an institution, beginning with the individual departments.

As one participant so aptly posed the issue, "How is the departmental chairperson expected to be an agent of change if he is not part of the follow-up survey process, or if the criteria that the survey evaluates do not match his own measures of success?"

Possible approaches to this dilemma point to the inclusion of departmental chairpersons from the beginning of the follow-up survey process. Standard survey questions for graduates of all departments may be augmented by "local issue" questions designed to elicit information deemed important by individual departments. Criteria of what constitutes "success" for graduates, against which a program will be evaluated, can be mutually negotiated, with input from those who have the closest connection with students in the eventual production of "success."

"Success measures" that pertain to purely quantitative (and possibly "materialistic") outcomes represent the easy aspect of outcome data collection. Although not even for two-year institutions should these be the only standards for evaluating student outcomes, they do tend to be more relevant for the two-year sector than for other colleges and universities. This no doubt explains to a large extent why follow-up surveys are more popular (sometimes being mandated statewide) at the community college level. The uncertainty surrounding the validity of survey questions that seek to probe the abstract outcomes of a college education ("How valuable was your college experience towards achieving your goals of cultural awareness?") will continue to plague researchers as they seek means for evaluating the effects of higher education. Perhaps Dr. Huff's conclusion that policymakers of today really accept the overall value of higher education as being a "good thing" obviates the constant preoccupation of researchers to measure the achievement of abstract objectives.

Even on the collection of the "easy" data—the quantifiable outcomes of higher education—doubts remain regarding the reliability of the data from follow-up surveys. College graduates with "successful" outcomes are more likely to respond to surveys and to cloud the results. Yet statistical techniques do exist, and should be used by institutional researchers to tame their findings to control for such bias.

Perhaps the most practical suggestion for preventing follow-up survey projects from gathering dust is the adoption, prior to initiating the survey, of a concrete plan for using the data. Who on campus will receive what portions of the findings? What reactions are expected from them upon receipt of the data? Clear, prior delineation of these aspects may be necessary if the purposes for conducting a follow-up survey are to be accomplished. Follow-up surveys used in this fashion, together with other evaluation tools, offer one way of maintaining control over higher education by educators, as opposed to losing control to the funding agencies.

Participants in SREB Workshop "Uses and Future Prospects of Follow-up Studies"

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John R. Bolte
Associate Vice President
for Academic Affairs
University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Randall W. Dahl, Coordinator
Kentucky Outcomes Project
Council on Higher Education
Frankfort, Kentucky

Margaret T. Estes
Associate Vice President
for Academic Affairs
Mississippi State University
Mississippi State, Mississippi

Robert Gell (Speaker)
President
Cecil Community College
North East, Maryland

Mario Goglia
Assistant Vice Chancellor
Board of Regents of the
University System of Georgia
Atlanta, Georgia

Mac Holderfield
Department of Research and Planning
State Board for Technical
and Comprehensive Education
Columbia, South Carolina

Robert Huff (Speaker)
Executive Coordinator
Arizona Board of Regents
Phoenix, Arizona

Roy L. Lassiter, Jr.
Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice
Chancellor for Academic Affairs
State University and Community College
System of Tennessee—System Office
Nashville, Tennessee

Tom Redmon
Assistant Director
The College Board
Southern Regional Office
Atlanta, Georgia

Donald J. Reichard, Director
Office of Institutional Research
University of North Carolina
at Greensboro
Greensboro, North Carolina

Anne Seawell
Director of Career Planning and Placement
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia

James D. Tschechtelin
Director of Planning and Research
Maryland State Board for Community Colleges
Annapolis, Maryland

SREB Staff Members: Eva C. Galambos, E. F. Schietinger, David S. Spence